

Potomac LAC Meeting Minutes

Sept 3, 2024

LAC Member Attendees

Mary Ammermann, Co-chair

Don Libes, Secretary

Sylvia Diss

Karen Grimm

Ella Hue

Rosemarie Lentini (virtual)

Wei Lu

Patty McGrath (virtual)

Michael Namath

LAC Member Absentees

Gael Cheek

Sheila Graves, Co-chair

Mallory Starr (previous meeting missed)

Carole Ottesen (previous meeting missed)

Roger Williams

Other Regular Attendees

Eric Carzon, Regional Mgr, Gaithersburg Region: Potomac, Gaithersburg, Olney, Quince Orchard

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board Liaison

Other Attendees

Xinyi Zhang, UMD doctoral student, Psych Dept, research in children's mental health, developing board game to address child bullying

Other Absences

Nancy Samson, Branch Supervisor

Names and abbreviations (unofficial, for convenience and clarity)

FOLMC: Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (old)

OneFOL: One FOLMC (new)

FOLP: Friends of the Library, Potomac Chapter (old)

FOPL: Friends of the Potomac Library (new)

PL: Potomac Library

MCLB: MC Library Board

Chair and Member Updates

Mary called meeting to order at 7:07pm. Agenda previously distributed by Sheila via plac group.

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/resources/files/board/LACs/potomac-agenda-20240903.pdf>

Introductions, attendees described their interests.

Visitor Xinyi Zhang described her research and a game she is developing to address bullying from elementary to high school. Discussed possibility of leveraging libraries. More discussion deferred to after adjournment.

Minutes from Previous LAC Meeting

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Mary moved to approve minutes from previous meeting with no changes. Ella seconded. Approved unanimously.

Eric Carzon, Regional Manager Report

[Cursory notes until Eric provides written report.]

110 programs during summer.

3100 attendees

4 storytimes a week

Crafternoon, filled with kids, once a week.

Teens have their own teen writing club.

Many teen volunteers.

Lots of adult programming.

Tech hours by appointment, small but vital program.

Joint programs with Potomac Gardening Club.

35 people attended recent gardening program for oncoming climate change.

Doing a good job covering 5 focuses/goals:

1. Prep children ages 0-5 for kindergarten
2. Ready teens for workforce and college
3. Residents with limited access
4. Older adult outreach
5. Environmental literacy, gardening club, butterfly release part, animal visit at each branch.

MCPL had moribund collections in Russian, Farsi, et al so we got rid of those.

Focusing on Spanish and Chinese this year, consolidated at specific branches.

Potomac will be one of the consolidation branches for Chinese books but we lack staff who have the skill.

Ella: I can help choosing Chinese books and am aware of Chinese book sources.

Sylvia: How do people get aware that Potomac has specific collections?

Eric: :Don't know. We can do some marketing.

Ella: People know by seeing branch ownership marks on books.

Eric: MCPL hasn't been so great at Spanish overall so we're not going to market that but will market as specific branches build up better collections.

Eric: This is why we keep asking Council for more money for world collections.

Michael: How many new books does MCPL or a branch get each year?

Eric: Don't know but I'll find out. Overall 7M items in collection but 3M are books.

Sylvia: Ebooks are more expensive than books.

Eric: Yes, significantly.

Ella: Experience with requesting book. Only got 1 of 10 but denials are fast.

Eric Described categories of denials.

Don: Not my experience. Took months for denial.

Sylvia: I've never received a denial.

Eric: Resubmit? Should get answers quickly to book rejections.

Ella: There should be an FAQ for this subject.

Ella: I couldn't get the library to buy a local author's book.

Eric: We have a process for local authors so we can take a look at them.

Karen: Can we offer author presentations?

Sylvia: We do author presentations at Connie Morella.

Don: FOLP did that until it dissolved. Unclear if PL has staff to do it.

Mary: Why did FOL dissolve?

Eric: Too long to go into at this time.

Eric: MCPL sponsors Contemporary Conversations .

Don: How often?

Eric: 6 a year for entire MCPL.

Don: Doesn't compare to FOLP which was extremely active.

Sylvia: Why can't Contemporary Conversations be made available via Zoom so entire county see it?

Ella: Could we partner with bookstores? DC Bookstores have the authors but not the space.

MCPL has the space but not the author network. Bookstores could provide the missing piece to MCPL.

Wei: DC bookstores are more likely to stay with DC libraries.

Eric: Bookstores want to sell books and MCPL policy doesn't allow that.

Ella: How did FOLP do it?

Wei: FOL had the money and volunteers willing to make the connections, network, publicity.

Don: Will we get a written report?

Eric: Sorry, I know I owe a written report for the previous meeting, too. I will get to it.

Jim: Does Story Time reach capacity?

Eric: Yes, that's why we split into 2 groups.

Eric: Staff have limited time to program.

Jim: So branch is not marketing story time?

Eric: Yes but we presume the public already knows since participation is already so high. So we don't see the point of further marketing.

Sylvia: Can people volunteer to help with Story Time?

Eric: Generally no. Staff have graduate degrees for a reason and are highly trained. State law says volunteers cannot do what staff are trained to do.

Sylvia: What about the Read to a Dog volunteers?

Eric: No conflict since staff isn't trained for working with dogs.

Eric: But we work with groups that offer insurance.

Ella: We could use more staff. Can staff manage volunteers?

Eric: Depends on the program. But generally yes, PL could always use more staff.

Don: Didn't PL recently expand hours stressing staff hours, for example, expanding to Sunday hours?

Eric: Yes. We've asked for more staff.

Patty: MCPL had problems in years past with unfilled vacancies. What's the status of that?

Eric: PL has no vacancies! System-wide MCPL has low-30s vacancies. Last year was 100.

Eric: Mark Villa is new teen librarian. Replaces Mike Joseph.

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board Liaison Report

Full board is meeting Sept 10.

Back to meeting in person. On the agenda: Should we meet hybrid? I'm against it.

May be some turmoil due to new LAC liaisons.

No info on MCPL director.

Eric: Down to 2 candidates.

County Exec must nominate new director.

Board meeting to determine advocacy goals.

My personal interest is child readiness, early literacy, and need for more staff and space.

Budget season is upon us.

Just sent schedule to plac for County Exec conversation to have background and listen to what people have to say. 11 sessions scheduled.

Eric: Bethesda/Chevy Chase meeting is most appropriate for PL.

Eric: LAC is encouraged to go and speak.

Jim: LAC members should attend at least one meeting.

Governor made speech recently that all education funding numbers are on the table which I interpret to mean the budget is difficult. There is a potential for cuts as happened last year.

I intend to raise the issue of new books.

Wei: Teens are just as important as pre-K. Right?

Jim: Yes, many people agree but too many demands, priorities make it more difficult to satisfy.

Karen: How much kindergarten readiness is due to language differences?

Jim: Some. Google “kindergarten readiness” and you’ll see lots of data.

Ella: Charts by ethnicity were taken down.

Jim: Not true.

Ella: Will post email saying it would be taken down.

Jim: Will post link to chart.

Old Business

Don: Status of inter-LAC discussion list?

Jim: Sorry, forgot. Will present at next Board meeting.

Eric: Most examples in the flyer are unsuitable.

Don: Delete whichever ones you dislike.

Someone: QR code would be helpful for printed flyer to avoid people having to key in long URL.

Jim: Can’t we create the list without Board involvement?

Don: No because only the Board has contact info of other branch’s LAC members.

Mary: For next LAC meeting, I propose: March 4, June 3, Sept. 2, Dec. 2

After discussion, agreement on Dec 3.

Eric: Some LACs meet bi-monthly, some monthly, generally shorter. I need to coordinate with other branches to avoid my own schedule conflict.

Jim: I prefer monthly because it better matches board schedule which is monthly. I recommend meeting a week before each board meeting.

New Business

Don: Signs say the library is not distributing masks but there are boxes in the foyer with masks.

Eric: Will look into it.

Don: Can we get the meeting room door quieted? Sounds like it just needs grease.

Eric: Will get on it.

Mary: Would like to explore possibility of inviting teen AC members to LAC meetings.

Eric: Teen AC is not really an advisory group despite the name. Not sure they would be interested.

Meeting adjourned : 8:51pm